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Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization

NEWSLETTER

Number 35



Mar. 23, 75

General Information

NO WINTER SOLDIER

There will be no April issue of Winter Soldier. The problem is an old one--money. There isn't any. The March issue cost approximately \$665 for 14 thousand copies; from chapters we have received slightly over \$100 for that issue, and that is better than it has been in the past. Multiply that by the past couple of years, and add extra money for the period when no one paid anything at all for the paper, and you can see that Winter Soldier is something less than a profit-making venture.

We can only repeat what has been said before. We see the paper as an invaluable political tool for the organization. Particularly in the last several issues, we see the articles on the work and actions of the organization as an important way to show people what we are doing and to explain why we are doing it. But the money to print the paper does not--and will not--fall from the sky. We hope to be able to print an issue (which will be the April/May issue) in the middle of April.

Revolutionary Student Brigade Calling for April 19th Demos Around War

The Revolutionary Student Brigade will be sponsoring national demonstrations on April 19th around the growing danger of war. Last week, the NO took a straw vote of regions because the RSB National Office had presented us with a proposal to co-sponsor these actions on a national level. We took the vote and a majority of regions voted in favor of this proposal. However, the straw vote has become unnecessary and RSB will be sponsoring these actions alone on the national level. This is because there were some date and place changes going on (which have now been ironed out for the most part). After reviewing the situation and the courses of action that the RSB had, the RSB National Office has decided that one month's notice is too short a time to bring together a national coalition; thus, they have asked that VVAW/WSO not co-sponsor the April 19th demonstrations. Instead, local RSB chapters will be forming coalitions around these national actions and trying to unite all who can be united around the demands of the actions.

As things stand now, there will be four national demonstrations held on April 19th -- in New York City, Chicago, the Bay Area and Los Angeles (though it may turn out that there is only one demonstration in California). Though the final demands have not been worked out, it looks fairly certain that they will be:

- * We Won't Fight Your Imperialist Wars!
- * Superpowers Hands Off the Mid-East -- Victory to the Palestinian People!
- * Victory to the Indochinese People -- End All Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol!

Because all of these demands are within the organizational positions of VVAW/WSO and because the growing threat of war is a major question that revolutionary forces in the US must begin addressing in a real way, the NO feels that VVAW/WSO chapters should take up these April 19th demonstrations and work with the RSB in building these actions around the country. RSB chapters will be contacting many of our chapters in different parts of the country, and we would strongly urge that chapters join in the coalitions that RSB is building on a local level around the country. It is important that our organization continue to build firmer ties with organizations such as the RSB wherever possible, and working around these April 19th actions can be one step in this direction. Also, we think it is important that VVAW/WSO be visible at these demonstrations. We have heard that organizations such as the CPUSA and the trotskyite Socialist Workers Party will also be holding demonstrations in April around the question of war. It is important that our organization be involved in demonstrations which can counter the reformist garbage that these other demonstrations will be putting out, so that we can be a part of an effort to take a good political understanding of the question of war to the masses of people in this country.

We would suggest that for those chapters who are going to work on these actions that the possibility of building vets contingents in these demos be investigated. Building vets contingents has been proven successful by some chapters in the organization in the past, and we think that this kind of thing could be particularly effective in a demonstration that will be dealing with the question of present and future wars, i. e. by putting forward the understanding that vets fought in the last imperialist war and we learned out lessons well enough to oppose any future imperialist wars. Also, chapters should be preparing, in light of these April 19th actions, for part of the character of the demonstrations to change to the victory of the Cambodian liberation forces in liberating Phnom Penh, as well as the great advances that the Vietnamese are making in liberating their country. It could well be that April 19th would fall in well with victory celebrations.

Another thing that we suggest is that the March 29th actions be used to help build the April 19th demonstrations. If chapters do decide to take up April 19th as something to work around, then this should be talked about at March 29th actions, by announcing the actions, having leaflets around the actions, etc. In other words, March 29th can be used to build for April 19th, and in turn, April 19th can be used to help build for our Armed Forces Day activities in May.

The NO will be getting materials from the RSB that are being produced on a national level. We will be sending these out to chapters who can use them, so if your chapter is interested in the April 19th actions, wants further information or would like materials for building the actions, contact the NO or the RSB chapter nearest to you.

Several VVAW/WSO chapters doing work in and around VA hospitals have been getting information from VA patients concerning the patients' anger around the use of "domiciliaries." From what we can piece together at this time, the program involves using patients to do the work which should be done by VA staff people, primarily as orderlies in the hospitals. For this work, patients are paid something like 30¢ or 40¢ per hour. The degree to which patients are pressured into doing this work seems to vary from place to place, but in many cases, this seems to be one of the few ways in which a patient can earn any money at all.

We need more information; chapters and individuals working in the VA should give special attention to these programs, find out how they work, what kinds of pressure are being put on patients, exactly what kinds of work are involved, etc. Several aspects of this program seem to us (on the basis of incomplete information) to have some real potential for organizing. The violation of the democratic rights of patients is one aspect; the use of what is objectively scab labor to do the jobs for which the unemployed could be hired is another important aspect. The fact that the VA has a huge budget which could be used in part to pay for this kind of staff work is another feature of the program--the money is going somewhere, and it isn't into patient care. Exploitation of patients is not one of the stated purposes of the VA.

Please find out what you can, and let us know. The sooner the better.

Trial Up-Dates

*Gary Lawton: Recently, the Riverside Political Prisoners Defense Committee sent out a press release to all chapters who were listed on the previous chapter list. Since most chapters have that release, we won't give a detailed run-down of what is happening with the Lawton trial. Chapters should be aware, however, that the third trial of Gary Lawton began on March 6th. Jury selection lasted for several weeks (see last issue of WS) and it was the presentation of evidence that began in early March. Since that time, it has become clear that the overwhelming majority of "evidence" is the same old shit that was brought out in the first and second trials. The essence of the prosecution's case is based around what is called the "four lies." These are: (1) the alleged sale of the murder weapon to Lawton by Ronald Williams and Ronald McKinnon; (2) the testimony of police officer Lund; (3) the alleged motive of revenge for the police shooting of William Palmer (a member of the community who later worked with the RPPDC); and (4) the so-called "jailhouse confessions" in which Lawton supposedly told his former cellmates that he committed the crime. These lies have been brought out in the previous trials, and are once again the essence of the prosecution's case, and these lies are rapidly being exposed by the defense. Also, more and more evidence is coming out around the government's failure to comply with court orders to release information, and the defense committee feels that the tide around the struggle of Gary Lawton is beginning to turn. For instance, the judge told the courtroom that if failure to comply with a court order is, in fact, proven, one of the consequences can be the dismissal of all charges. This is the first time that the dismissal of charges has been mentioned and it may be a sign of things to come.

Though the defense of Gary Lawton is going well inside the courtroom, we still have to remember that it is the power of the people united in support of this struggle that will finally set Gary free. More chapters are beginning to take up Lawton's work in a real way, and chapters should push harder around this struggle to really do the work of building a mass movement around his defense. Also, there is growing support within the Riverside community. On the opening day of the trial, about 30 people held a picket line in front of the Riverside Police Department. By the time the picket line was over, there were over 75 people involved and the demonstrators then marched through the center of town chanting "Free Gary Lawton, Fight Police Repression!" Another sign that support is growing within the community is that a steel worker took a Lawton petition to work with him. By the end of the day, he had gotten everyone in his department to sign the petition, except for two Jesus-freaks who refused to sign. He also sold several buttons. VVAW/WSO must seize the initiative of the growing movement around Gary Lawton. Now is the time to really push for people to send letters to the judge (leaflets were sent out with the last newsletter mailing) demanding that all charges against Lawton be dropped and that the harassment of Gary and of his supporters be stopped. If you don't have the address, people should send letters to: Judge Leo Deegan, 4050 Main St., Riverside, California 92501. This letter-writing campaign also needs to be popularized within chapter communities, so get out there and spread the word, get those petitions signed, and build that movement which will finally set Gary Lawton free!



* Bob Hood: A victory was won in the case of Bob Hood when all charges against Bob (a member of VVAW/WSO in Oakland) were dropped on March 6th. The day the charges were dropped was exactly 13 months after Hood was arrested and charged with assaulting a police officer with a deadly weapon in Feb., 1974. Hood went to trial on these charges in January of this year and after two weeks, a mistrial was declared because the jury was hung (see February issue of WS for more details about the trial). The frame-up of Bob Hood began with his arrest following a reign of terror by Oakland police as a result of the killing of Marcus Foster and kidnapping of Patricia Hearst by the SLA. Hood was stopped while driving a friend's car (the car had previously belonged to an alleged member of the SLA). He was asked to get out of the car and was then attacked by Officer Ted Burrows of the OPD. Following the brutal beating, Bob was arrested for allegedly assaulting Burrows with a deadly weapon -- a 3" pocket knife that was found in Bob's pocket after he had been handcuffed. The government knew they had no real case against Hood with the previous hung jury, the state was backed into a corner to the point where all charges were dropped.

* Other trials in California: Elsewhere in northern California, VVAW/WSO members are facing charges on two other incidents. Two VVAW/WSO members were arrested on Jan. 23rd in San Jose, along with 28 other people, as a result of a demonstration which was held outside the courthouse where Ruchell Magee was sentenced to life in prison. We aren't certain when these people will be in court, but they have all been charged with "demonstrating near a courthouse" and are expected to have court dates sometime in March. Also, 13 members will be in court soon as a result of the take-over of the Saigon Consulate on Jan. 25th in San Francisco. These 13 people have been charged with "trespassing," and we aren't certain about their final court dates either. (See March issue of WS and last newsletter for more details about both of these arrests).

* Danny Friedman (Shea Stadium Attack): The trial of Danny Friedman, one of the VVAW/WSO members beaten by guards at the Shea Stadium attack which occurred during the "Honor Vietnam Veterans" baseball game, has been continued until April 18th because the court calendar has been full. Danny is the only person out of those who were attacked by Shea Stadium guards who is still facing charges, and he will be going to trial on charges of 3rd degree assault.

* GRUNC 10: On Oct. 29th of last year, 10 people liberated the Cambodian (Lon Nol) Mission to the United Nations in New York City. Members of VVAW/WSO, Indochina Peace Campaign, Indochina Solidarity Committee, Revolutionary Student Brigade and White Lightning were involved with this take-over and charged with criminal trespass. All charges against these 10 people were dropped in late January (we forgot to notify people in the last newsletter) because some of the people involved in pressing charges decided not to show up at court and present evidence against the GRUNC 10.

* Cincinnati 7: The trial of the Cincinnati 7 is set for April 14th. The Cincinnati 7 were attacked and arrested by police as they were picketing the Cincinnati Federal Courthouse last Sept. 17th. The pickets and leafleters were there as part of the James Hardy Defense Committee, a coalition of groups in Cincinnati built to support a Black community activist on trial for "intimidating a police officer." The seven people (four of them are VVAW/WSO members) were charged, variously, with assault and battery on a police officer, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct.

* Chicago: The Campaign to Stop Police Repression has won a major victory. Antowyn Caulley, a young Black man around whom the Chicago Committee to Stop Police Repression was started, was found not guilty of the frame-up charges against him. The week-long trial, which ended on March 14th, was attended by 20-30 supporters, including members of the Chicago chapter of VVAW/WSO. The announcement of the not guilty verdict was met by cheers and chants of "The People United Will Never be Defeated!" The Committee (of which VVAW/WSO is a part, saw the victory as a result of the growing campaign against police repression which has consistently been taken out to the people in communities in and around Chicago. Victories like Antowyn's are part of the growing strength of the campaign and the militancy of people in the communities who are determined to defend themselves and fight police attacks.

The police demonstrated their fear of the growing strength of the people on Jan. 25th when the campaign held a march and rally in a predominantly Latino community. The cops attacked the demonstration and arrested 17 people. Eight of those arrested still face charges. Seven of the eight, including 4 VVAW/WSO members, are facing felony charges of aggravated battery, and the remaining defendant is charged with misdemeanors, including resisting arrest. On the first trial date (for the misdemeanor case), the campaign held a militant picket line in front of Chicago police headquarters. The police were so eager to see the picketers leave and the chanting stop that the case was moved up to the first on the court docket and the defendant was quickly hustled out of the court room after a brief motion for continuance was granted. The defendant then joined the picket line, and after about 15 minutes, people dispersed.

The court date for the seven felony charges is April 11th and the campaign is planning to show support there as well. The trials are an integral part of the campaign. Consistent organizing work is being done in the communities and people are getting together to plan activities both around the trials and around the day-to-day problems of police repression.

The VA and Behavior Modification

Individual Rights and the Federal Role in Behavior Modification is the name of a volume put out by the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Senate Judiciary Committee (this was Sam Ervin's committee in the last Senate). While the majority of the report (which is relatively short) and the back-up documents (which is lengthy) is devoted to the prison system, there are sections dealing with the role of the Veteran Administration. What follows are sections of the report.

"As it became apparent that the Federal Government funds a large number of behavioral research and modification programs, the subcommittee discovered that a number of other departments and agencies were involved in activities relating to the modification of human behavior. The most notable of these is the Veterans Administration, which, in testimony at joint hearings before the Senate Health Subcommittee and the Subcommittee on Health and Hospitals of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, admitted conducting numerous psychosurgical operations. Of particular note are the following aspects of the VA's policy concerning psychosurgery:

"Approval for individual operations is secured from the central office of the VA. No higher authority is required.

Although the VA has guidelines restricting the use of psychosurgery, it considers the practice to be therapy and not an experimental technique.

The VA stated that the lobotomies popular in the 1950's were a poor method of behavior therapy; but the agency presented no evidence that present methods of psychosurgery aimed at producing a more "normal" human being were any more effective.

The VA indicated that it considered drug users and alcoholics as potentially violent patients, and therefore possible subjects for psychosurgery. . . .

"The subcommittee was concerned both by the fact that Veterans Administration research is decentralized and subject to no agency-wide coordination and control, and by the fact that many techniques employed by the VA are considered "therapy" even though other federal departments and agencies consider the same techniques "experimental." Moreover, the agency indicates that a patient could be subjected against his will to a process designed to alter his behavior:

'As to whether a patient might refuse psychotropic or behavioral modifications programs or psychosurgery drugs, this must be determined by the same criteria that determines the patient's capacity to give informed consent for any treatment. Good professional practice seeks to find a way to engage the patient in doing those things which are likely to be beneficial to him, recognizing that at times the individual's capacity to form sound judgments for himself is seriously impaired. Under these latter circumstances, a variety of considerations must be reviewed by the physician with the conclusion, at times, that treatment must be insisted upon despite the patient's temporary objections. In many circumstances, it may be that a judgment will have to be made by a responsible person legally entitled to act on behalf of the patient.' (The final paragraph comes from a letter to the committee from then director of the VA, Donald Johnson.)

Cutting through some of the bureaucratese, the VA prides itself on having reduced the use of psychosurgery--they admit to only 15 psychosurgical operations since 1960. Four hospitals are "qualified" to carry out these operations: Durham, N. C.; Long Beach, CA; Minneapolis, Minn; and Syracuse, NY. The VA points to the fact that this is a major change from the late 1940's when over 1500 lobotomies were conducted and when a review of the procedure "failed to give clear-cut evidence regarding the value of the therapy." In other words, the lobotomies were essentially an experiment with human guinea pigs, and the experiment failed. What happened to the lobotomized veterans is not pointed out,

The reason for changing tactics inside the VA is not humanitarian. According to M. J. Musser, MD, Chief Medical Director of the VA, "The difference between the past and the present reflect a number of advances in the management of psychiatric patients: better controls of unproved or experimental procedures, ever-increasing improvement in the quality and use of psychotropic drugs, the development of new and more effective techniques of psychotherapy, and finally, marked improvement and upgrading of psychiatric education, training, and skills--all of which make it possible to treat effectively most patients with abnormal behavior of psychiatric origin without recourse to psychosurgery."

Dr Musser goes on to describe the VA medical research program where the "physician-investigator takes the problems arising at his patient's bedside to the research laboratory for study and elucidation." This potential is listed by Dr. Musser as one of the reasons which has made it possible "for the VA to recruit and

retain physicians of outstanding caliber." One interpretation (not given by Dr Musser) is that the large number of patients provide a recruiting tool for the VA to reach out to doctors interesting in experimentation on live patients who have little choice as to where they are treated.

In response to direct questions about experimentation on "human subjects," Dr Musser talks about the various review procedures, and quotes the VA Manual--"The wisdom and sound professional judgment of the investigator, professional staff members R&E committee, and the subcommittee on human studies collectively will be used in determining what constitutes the rights and welfare of human subjects in research, which constitutes informed consent, and what constitutes risk and potential medical benefit of the use of a particular drug and/or investigational procedure."

While understanding the need for medical research and experimentation, what we know about the VA and its hospital system leads to a number of suspicions about the internal review system, particularly with the understanding that most VA patients are essentially prisoners in the hospitals.

The report also contains a full description of the treatment of "disturbed" patients through the "token economy programs." The goals of this program, now carried out in 20 VA hospitals, are to "reduce or eliminate the occurrences of behaviors most people would react to as bizarre, illogical, frightening, annoying or otherwise unacceptable...." While the report carries the full description of the program, it boils down to making patients "earn" tokens through some acceptable act; the tokens can then be exchanged for a wide variety of things, starting out with meals and a bed, and moving on to what the VA considers "luxuries."

Chapters or individuals interested in the report can get a copy from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; the stock number of 5270-02620. The price is \$5.35; the full title is given at the beginning of this section of the newsletter. The majority of the material relates to prisons--it is good material to have for any prison work. Chapters who have some kind of non-hostile relationship with Congresspeople can probably write to them and get the volume for nothing.



NCUUA--The "Congressional Strategy"

A meeting was held in Toronto on the weekend of March 8-9 between representatives of AMEX, TAEA (Toronto American Exiles Association), VVAW/WSO and the national office of NCUUA. The subject was the "Congressional Strategy" put forward in the most recent "Amnesty Update," the NCUUA national newsletter. Boiled down to its essentials, that newsletter asked for support from NCUUA affiliates for two bills in Congress, one in the Senate proposed by Senator Phillip Hart, and one in the House, proposed by Bella Abzug.

Although there was a good deal of struggle at the meeting, there was a unified position around rejecting support for those bills, particularly since neither of them grant universal, unconditional amnesty for all war resisters (and that is one of the unifying principles of NCUUA). There was further struggle around the idea of focusing work on Congress at all--we need to rely on the people, not the Congress.

A letter is now being drafted in the VVAW/WSO NO which will go to AMEX, TAEA, and other groups working on amnesty; our hope is to have the letter signed by VVAW/WSO and by various exile groups and then sent out to all the NCUUA affiliates around the country, putting forward our position on work specifically around these two bills, and more generally around working with Congress. Copies of this letter will also be going to all chapters.

There is struggle inside the NCUUA national office around this strategy. We feel that letters from amnesty groups or coalitions around the country, sent to the NCUUA national office, will help to underline the point that lobbying Congress is not the way for people to make real gains. Chapters or individuals who are part of amnesty coalitions affiliated with NCUUA should look at the latest amnesty update and try to do educational work around the issue with the objective of having these groups send off letters to the national NCUUA office expressing their opposition to the "Congressional Strategy."

London Chapter of VVAW/WSO Writes About Amnesty

Fritz Efaw of the VVAW/WSO London chapter has an article published in the February 28th issue of the New Statesman entitled "Why Ford's Amnesty Failed." The concluding paragraphs of that article are reprinted below:

"The notion that Vietnam veterans and draft dodgers are somehow at odds with one another is quite spurious. The largest organisation of Vietnam veterans in the US, the VVAW/WSO, is one of the strongest supporters of universal, unconditional amnesty. This hard fact is the strongest answer possible to critics of amnesty who are opposed on the grounds that it would dishonour the men who died in the war. It is true that for every young man who dodged the draft another took his place on the battlefield and faced death, but placing the blame for these American (not to mention Vietnamese) deaths on draft dodgers rather than on the US Government is a fallacy that veterans themselves see through more clearly than most other people.

"The major change which has resulted from the programme is a growing support for unconditional amnesty. A Gallup poll taken in November showed 41 per cent of

those questioned in favour of such a course, as opposed to around 50 per cent in polls taken a year ago. Constitutional amnesty has failed, and the divisions of the war remain, as does, indeed, the war itself. Increasingly the only solution to closing these divisions is complete US withdrawal from Indochina coupled with universal, unconditional amnesty."

Regional Reports

March 29th Demonstrations

In the last newsletter, we ran down a lot of our thoughts on the March 29th -- Vietnam Veterans Days activities and how they should be put forward, the importance of these actions, etc. Again, we would like to say that these actions are extremely important for our on-going National Program and to build a fighting anti-imperialist veterans movement, as well as addressing the question of the danger of imperialist war (with the US ruling class trying to find a way out of their current economic crisis). It is important that we build these demonstrations to be militant, fighting demonstrations which will show how the system of imperialism is screwing vets, as well as all poor and working people. We know that there is a lot of activity planned for Vietnam Veterans Day by chapters all over the country. We don't have many details yet on what is being planned, but we will run down to people what we do know about in case a few ideas might be inspired in other chapters. Once the actions are over, we will give a more detailed sum-up of the actions in the next newsletter, as well as in the next issue of WINTER SOLDIER.

People should be sure to remember that we will again be needing summations of their activities, as well as photographs, as soon after the demonstrations as possible. Chapters responded quite well to this request following the Jan. 27th activities, so remember to get summations and photos in to us as quickly as possible. We aren't certain when the next issue of the paper will be coming out, but we hope that it can be sometime during the first couple of weeks of April -- so get us the information!

*Washington, DC/Baltimore: The VVAW/WSO chapters in the Maryland/DC region will be uniting together to hold a march and rally on March 28th in Washington. The demonstration will begin at an unemployment office where a rally will be held. Following the rally, a march through the Washington community will be held and it will terminate at the VA for another rally. Because the Baltimore and DC chapters have learned through their work at the VA that the primary concern of many veterans is unemployment, the major demand of the demonstration will be Jobs or Income for All! The other two demands which are being raised are: Decent Benefits for All Veterans, and Implement the Agreement--End All Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol (this second demand will be placed in the context of imperialist wars in general and the situation in the Middle East will also be brought out). The VVAW/WSO chapters are working with several other groups in a coalitional effort to build for their March 28th action. These groups include the Revolutionary Union, the Revolutionary Student Brigade, the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee. Other organizations which are supporting the action and actively working to build it are: Iranian Students Association, Ethiopian Student Union of North America,

Eritreans for Liberation-South America, African Liberation Support Committee and the February 1st Movement.

Chapters have been leafletting for this action for the past couple of weeks and they are focusing their building activities at the VA and unemployment centers. As was reported in the last newsletter, both the Baltimore and DC chapters have weekly picket lines at the VA, and these picket lines are being utilized to build for the March 28th action. Also, the chapter is working with UWOC at the unemployment offices 3 days a week to build for the demonstration. The region expects that they can bring out at least 150 people for this action -- many of them new.

*Northern California: Chapters in northern California will be holding two actions during the week of March 22nd -- one on the 22nd and one on the 29th. Both demonstrations will be held at Bird Air -- an Oakland-based firm which operates out of Thailand and is responsible for the air-lifts into Phnom Penh. The actions are being built by a coalition of groups, though we aren't certain what other organizations are involved in building for these demonstrations. The demands of both actions will be: Implement the Paris Agreement, Cut All Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol, Free All Political Prisoners, and Universal & Unconditional Amnesty.

*Southern California: There will be a total of 3 actions around March 29th in southern California. On March 28th, the Orange County chapter will be holding a demonstration at an unemployment office. They are building for this action by leafletting and talking with people at the unemployment office, as well as military bases surrounding their community. The Orange County chapter will join the Los Angeles and Long Beach chapters on March 29th in Los Angeles for a demonstration at the Westwood VA. Los Angeles has primary responsibility for building this action and they are doing build-up work at the VA, at unemployment offices and on campuses within the city. The rally at the VA will include a speaker who is a VA worker. In Riverside, a rally will be held at the unemployment office, followed by a march through the community on March 29th. The primary demands which are being raised at all three of these demonstrations are: Decent Benefits for All Vets Regardless of Discharge, and Jobs of Income for All.

*New York City--Chapters from the southern New York/New Jersey sub-region will join for a demonstration in New York City on the 29th. Starting with a rally in Union Square and music (hopefully by Prairie Fire) the demonstration will march to Herald Square; a speaker from VVAW/WSO will speak on the need for building a fighting veterans movement; IPC will speak on the liberation struggle in Indochina; a speaker from ISA will talk about the demand of no US troops in the Middle East; a speaker from UWOC will speak about Jobs or Income for All; and a speaker from the March 29th Coalition will speak on how the imperialist system inevitably leads to war.

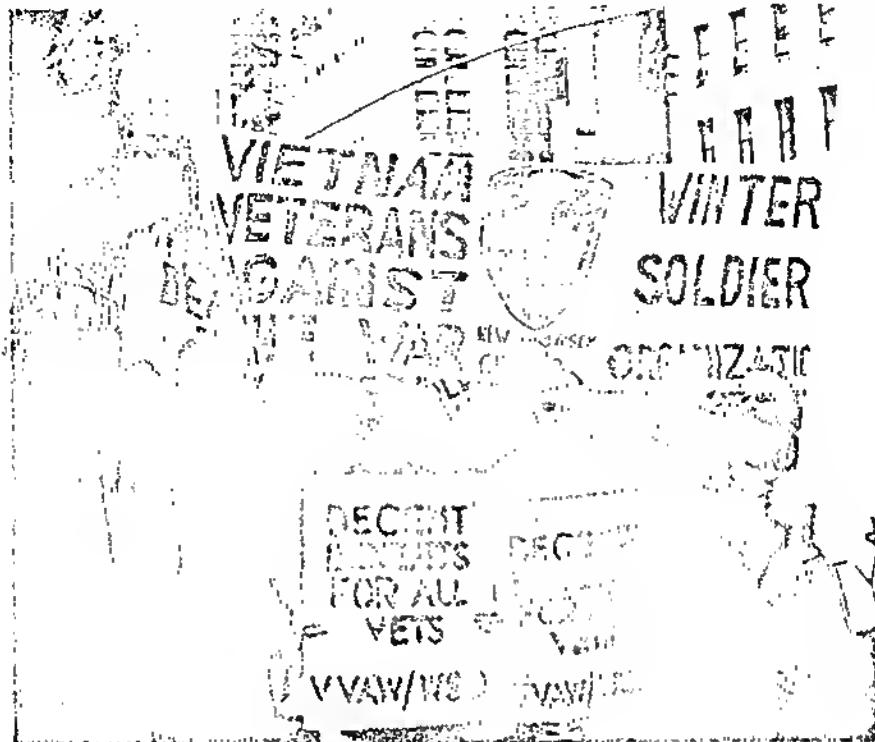
Building actions for the 29th include somewhere around 20,000 leaflets, radio tapes, RSB Forums being held around the city on the danger of war, and, perhaps most important, the building of the Coalition to Build March 29th, a coalition of a number of groups and organizations in New York City all working together to build the 29th actions.

*Boston--The New England Region and a coalition of groups in Boston is planning an action in Boston for the 29th. A rally will later be followed by an open forum in which the danger of war will be discussed, and people will have the opportunity to ask questions or put forward positions particularly concerning the Middle East.

* Syracuse--A picket and rally are planned for noon on Friday, March 28th at the VA Office. The demands are Decent Benefits for All Vets! Jobs or Income for All! Implement the Peace Agreements/End All Aid to Lon Nol and Thieu!

* Milwaukee--In Milwaukee, the action is planned for April 2nd and will involve a number of the people working with the chapter in the VA Hospital, the scene of a number of actions in the past.

* Detroit--The action is planned for April 6th, at which time there is scheduled a large VFW parade honoring the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the US Army.



Cincinnati VA Demo

The following report on a March 15th VA demonstration comes from the Cincinnati Chapter.

"As usual, our demo at the VA hospital was characterized by mistakes and advances. Build-up continues to be a problem--we need to involve more people. We concentrated on the unemployment office and, to a lesser degree, the VA hospital. There we relied upon informal (unsystematic) means, e.g. one or two people going in and talking to some people. We need to develop better, more consistent work around the VA if we are to build a real base inside as well as outside. We realize that we are only beginning our campaign against the VA, but we feel it is important to begin in a sharp way and build from there.... Anyhow, although we only got out about 1500 leaflets, we brought out about 50 people, some of them new.

"As for the demo itself, it was spirited and militant. We did make one tactical error. Despite the police there to separate us from the hospital, we decided spontaneously to go onto the grounds, to push the pigs as far as we could. Halfway into the property, we were stopped by the pigs, and we stood around for a short time in indecision. We then had a few short, militant speeches, chanted, and resumed the

picket line. We should have had a plan or two, and we should have considered our reasons for this action before we put it into practice. For example, we didn't consider the fact that we do not yet have a real base inside the hospital--especially on Saturday when the clinics are closed and many patients are out on passes. We also had no clear idea of what we would do if we went inside--reminiscent of the VA action on the first day of the July demo. We learned that we must plan carefully, be bold, but avoid sheer adventurism--i.e., put politics in command.

"By far the best aspect of the demo was the fact that a number of people, in the spirit of the demo, spoke out against the VA and the imperialist system. Some of those speaking out were a member of VVAW/WSO who usually doesn't speak, a Black WW II vet, a Black Vietnam vet denied benefits by Soldiers and Sailors Relief, Michael Branch, ex-POW and recent patient of the VA hospital who spoke about the hospital as part of the overall attack upon poor and working people, and a few others.

"After the demo four of us went into the hospital to talk to the few patients who were there. In general, they thought that the demo was a good thing. Most of their complaints involved use of drugs to keep people passive and "cooperative," and pressure upon the patients to do VA hospital work that should be done by more staff."

Demo Around Soldiers and Sailors Relief

This report is also from Cincinnati:

"On March 12th, VVAW/WSO and UWOC jointly held a demonstration at Soldiers and Sailors Relief in the County Courthouse, to demand benefits to an individual refused help by the bogus vets service agency. We also raised the demands: Decent Benefits for All Vets, A Single-Type Discharge for All Vets, and Jobs or Income for All. The spokesperson called for vets and other workers to unit to fight for these demands and against the system attacking us. The spokesperson, a laid-off Black vet with a bad discharge, and member of VVAW/WSO and UWOC, pointed out "they tell us to re-up and join the Army, but we're already in the army--the army of the unemployed!"

"Despite threats of arrest, over 30 people crowded inside the courthouse and demanded that the administrator, Colonel Dooley, come down and hang down his head. Forced to comply, he and his jive agency were exposed. The pigs and their bosses were apparently reluctant to make any arrests of vets and supporters demanding their rightful benefits before a large number of people as well as the press and their cameras. Several onlookers joined in, and joined chants like "A Single-Type Discharge for All Vets/ Jobs, Income, and Benefits!" Among all the other Catch 22's that expose the Soldiers and Sailors Relief as a sham is the fact that, like their fraternal rip-off, the VA, they don't give any crumbs at all to vets with bad discharges. In fact, about the most significant "benefit" they give is free burial plots for vets--and they don't say where.

"Despite the fact that we only had a day and a half to build for the action, response was very good, . . . We feel that this action did much to build for the VA demo (see above). We suggest that other chapters investigate this target for possible actions. Many people don't even know it exists, and vets discover it when referred

there by other bogus agencies like the VA and unemployment office. By the way, they don't give benefits to strikers or those "fired for cause," either."

**Other chapters or individuals with information about or knowledge of the Soldiers and Sailors Relief should pass this information along to the NO. We'll compile it and send it out for general use.

Report from Washington, DC /Baltimore Chapters

In the last newsletter, there was a report from the Maryland/DC region, and since that report, we have received another follow-up summation: The regional activity for Vietnam Veterans Day is included elsewhere in this newsletter, so we will not go into that here. The region held a regional meeting on Feb. 15th to discuss further plans for building the region, sum-up their past mistakes and successes and ways to move forward. The region has had some problems with people's defeatist attitudes, i.e., members who expressed doubts about the mass movement. This has been a problem in the region because it has led to demoralization of other chapter members and these problems were discussed at the regional meeting, the reasons behind such attitudes were brought out and the region has begun dealing with them as one way to overcome past failures and move chapter work ahead.

The region also discussed their VA work and summed it up. In the last newsletter, we reported that the region was considering moving their weekly picket lines from VA offices to VA hospitals. The region has decided against that for a couple of reasons. They feel that the primary demand of our program is Jobs or Income For All. This is because of their work at the VA offices and the fact that the majority of vets that they have contact with as a result of their work are most concerned about getting jobs. This is why they are at VA offices, and the chapters felt that it would be a mistake to drop this work at the offices in order to move it to another VA facility. Though the chapters raise other demands, particularly Decent Benefits, at their weekly picket lines and in leaflets, they feel that work around jobs is primary over working around benefits at this time. As a result of this decision, the chapters are broadening their day-to-day work to also include consistent work at unemployment offices. Though this has just recently begun, the region has already seen good results from this work and they have made contacts with several vets who are interested in the work of the organization, and they are also getting commitments from vets who plan to come to the March 28th action. Also, most of the new contacts that the chapters are making -- both through their unemployment work and VA work -- are either Black or other third world vets

Amnesty work is also moving forward within the region. On March 1st, several hundred people demonstrated in Washington around UUA, though the majority of them were liberal-church types. About 8 VVAW/WSO people attended the demo and leafleted the other demonstrators. The chapter members succeeded in winning leadership of the action and organized militant chanting which the majority of the demonstrators participated in. Later, 60 demonstrators went in front of the White House and sat down, waiting to be arrested. While this was going on, VVAW / WSO led the rest of the people outside the White House gates in chanting support to the demonstrators who were being arrested to the cry of "The People United Will Never Be Defeated." Apparently, the pacifists who were getting arrested were

somewhat shocked by the militance and organization that was mobilized in their support. Elsewhere, on March 5th, two VVAW/WSO members spoke at a small forum which was sponsored by RSB at Towsen State College. The chapter members spoke about amnesty, as well as the threat of imperialist war and the upcoming March 28th action.

Other work in the region has included support work for the struggle of Gary Lawton. On Feb. 7th, the region sponsored a fund-raising benefit for Lawton at the University of Maryland. The benefit had everything needed to make it a great success except for people. There was music, leaflets, petitions, buttons, and cold beer. The band, room and advertising were paid for by the school, but only about 50 people showed up. In summing up the benefit, the region agreed that they had not planned the politics as to how to get people to attend the benefit. For instance, there was not enough advance leafletting on who Gary Lawton is, the publicizing of the benefit was not planned well, and the entire membership wasn't involved in building for the benefit. Instead, the region relied on just a few people to organize and do all the work. The chapter didn't loose money on the benefit, but they didn't make any money either. One good thing that has come out of this is that the university felt so bad that no money was raised for Lawton that they are going to sponsor another benefit for Gary Lawton in the future. The date hasn't been set but the region is determined to learn from their past mistakes around the first benefit and really get out and build for this second fund-raiser.



Ann Arbor Demonstration

The Detroit chapter of VVAW/WSO was among a number of groups participating in a demonstration in Ann Arbor on March 12th when the University of Michigan was "honoring" President Katzir of Israel. The VVAW/WSO members carried a banner proclaiming, "We Won't Fight Your Imperialist Wars."

Some 200 people turned out for the demonstration and march. When one of the marchers was arrested, the demonstration kept on going right into the police station, where the demand to free the arrested student and drop the charges was militantly raised; the police released the student and dropped charges.

Middle East Forum Repulses JDI Attacks

On March 3, the Old Westbury chapter of VVAW/WSO sponsored a Forum on the Middle East. When it became known that the PLO would have a speaker at the Forum, and when various Zionist groups in the area began to protest, the school tried to back down from the permission they gave for the program; the school, however, was held to its word and the Forum proceeded.

Approximately 400 people heard speakers from the PLO, the ISA, the RU, and the Action Committee on Arab-American Relations, following a showing of the film "Revolution Until Victory." Small groups of the Jewish Defense League (JDL) popped up at various points in the program and were thrown out with a minimum of force. When the forum was over, people went to the parking lot and found that some 25 cars in the parking lot had been vandalized. Local Zionist racists were quick to try to blame the local Black student Union (who, they had said, were responsible for the Forum in the first place). The bubble burst, however, when JDL called and insisted on being given credit for the vandalism.

As reported in Newsday, "During the question period after the speeches, one man asked... 'Why is only one side heard from the speakers' platform?' (This had been one of the major points of contention during the planning of the Forum between the VVAW/WSO chapter and the school). One of the organizers of the meeting replied, "Every day I can turn on the television or pick up a copy of the New York Times and get the Zionist point of view. This meeting is for the peoples' point of view."

National Office Reports

Interim Committee Meetings, April 5 & 6

By now, all chapters should have received the mailing concerning the interim committee meetings; these mailings contained a basic outline of the meetings and the various papers written to date concerning the content of those meetings. The Chicago chapter, which is acting as host for these meetings, will be sending out more detailed information in the near future.

As pointed out in the original mailing, it is necessary that the NO be informed at least a week in advance about people planning to attend the meetings. All delegates should be approved by the regional offices in their respective regions. Anyone with special needs--medical, dietary, childcare, etc--should let us know as soon as possible.

We feel that both of these meetings can be of great importance to the future of the organization, and believe that all regions should make a real effort to send at least one delegate to each meeting. Both the input from regions around the country, and the ability to carry the discussion back to the regions and chapters, is essential to the success of these meetings and to the work they are designed to carry out.

Alternative Service of National Coordinators

Ed Damato was re-elected to the National Office at the St. Louis NSCM. According to policy, Ed is currently doing his alternative service with the Detroit VVAW/WSO chapter. All total, he will spend about 3 weeks in Detroit helping to push forward the work of the chapter by leafleting, selling newspapers, attending and helping to plan demonstrations, and generally, doing day-to-day work with the chapter. He will return to the NO on about March 19th.

New Chapter List

Enclosed with this mailing is a new chapter list. The last chapter list was put out in December and much of it is out-dated. Regions and chapters should check this list for errors, addresses that should and should not be there, etc. and let the NO know if the list is correct. Also, regional offices should be more conscientious about getting address changes, deletions and additions to the NO as soon as the addresses are known.

GI Manual Now Available

The latest edition of Turning the Regs Around, a Handbook on Military Law and Counseling -- An Aid to Organizing for GIs and Civilians, is now available from the National Office at \$1.25 per copy. Bulk orders of two or more should be ordered from the publisher at the following address: Turning The Regs Around, P.O. Box 8413, San Diego, California 92102. The price for 2-10 copies is \$1.00 each; the price for 11 or more copies is 75¢ each.

Information Requests

Request for VA Information

Members of the Columbus chapter of VVAW/WSO are currently working on an important legal action against the VA for malpractice and Drug Behavior Modification. This particular case involves a Columbus chapter member who has been fighting the VA tooth and nail for a period of two years. During this time, the chapter member has been subject to harassment of losing his job, VA benefits, home, car, furniture, as well as being continually harassed by various police agencies -- including the FBI and Secret Service -- as a result of the continued fight against the VA.

Aside from the obvious legal motions, chapter members are working with this case as one way to build a fighting vets movement in Columbus. What is needed is any documented cases of malpractice and/or Drug Behavior Modification going on that chapters have knowledge of, including reports of general rotten conditions and harassment going down in VA hospitals in your respective areas.

If you have information, send it, as soon as possible, to: VVAW/WSO, P.O. Box 10116, Columbus, Ohio 43201. Information should be sent to the attention of Mark Rovick.

(OOPS! This was left out of regional news)

Columbus VVAW/WSO GI Report: February -- A Comprehensive Analysis of Local Conditions

Guard and Reserve Work: We are presently doing leaflet and paper passouts with six Guard and Reserve units in Columbus. We initiated work with 3 Guard units -- artillery, infantry, and an Air National Guard refueling wing. The ANG wing has a history of callups during National emergencies in the past. Presently, they are in the midst of updating their planes to KC-135s. The 2 Army Guard units are likely choices in state emergencies. Most recent developments in this area is that the guards at Lucasville State Prison are talking strike because the Rhodes Administration (state government) has failed to begin talks on a soon-to-expire contract. Overall, minimal contacts have developed in some units, but presently feedback is low. One problem in the chapter is that people are really lax about doing the passouts and don't get out to the gates on time or at all.

Rickenbacker AFB: In the area of active-duty military, a couple of new contacts have developed, one contact that we made back in January is presently awaiting disposition for slugging an NCO.

Feb. 12th: We did a leaflet passout in the barracks around the Billy Dean Smith case, and the harassment of Black GIs at Minor AFB. We received some good response from people in the barracks and not so good response from the Security Police -- as we were to learn on Thursday, Feb. 27th.

Feb. 18th: We spoke to an academic class for about an hour on the subjects of resistance, Dutch GI Union, racism in the military, sexism, the role of the military today, etc. For the most part, it was a good experience but not noticeably productive. The instructor was an ex-Army Colonel and continually attempted to take over the floor to interject his opinions and trash our statements on the basis that our figures were incorrect.

Feb. 27th: We did a leaflet and GI NEWS passout in the barracks. We had approximately 260 distributed when we were grabbed by the Security Police. We were hauled to the Base pig office where we were detained for about 90 minutes and informed we were illegally distributing unauthorized literature, and J---- was questioned by an OSI agent. As a result, they found nothing out, but we gathered that articles about resisting military police arrests really gets them uptight. In the end, we were escorted off base and told we had to receive permission from the base commander in the future.

Criticisms of February GI NEWS: It strongly resembled WINTER SOLDIER as far as content of articles goes. We feel that GI NEWS should be devoted to GI struggles and if there ain't no news of GI struggles for that particular month, then articles of GI resistance history or informative articles on regulations of issues, or possibly an article on Armed Forces Day -- which is 10 weeks away.

From people who saw both the February WS and GI NEWS, we got such comments as: "the content is duplicated," "the two papers should be combined, and the rhetoric cutdown." The content of the articles on GI struggles was good but we weren't in full understanding of what the new developments were in the case of the Little Rock Bros.

We felt the column "What Is VVAW/WSO" was overly rhetorical and it is difficult to wade through more than a sentence or two without running into the word imperialism/

In closing, we would like to see the project reports appear in the National Newsletter so we could find out what other projects are doing, and to encourage chapters not currently doing GI work to get involved in it.